



Representative
Gary Chandler
13TH DISTRICT



1998 Session Preview

Serving Kittitas • Yakima • Grant • and Benton counties



Dear Friends:

The state Legislature began its 1998 session Jan. 12, and we have a full range of issues to cover in just 60 days.

As chairman of the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee, I'll be focusing on water issues, which are very important to the people of Washington state, and especially to those of us in the 13th District. From salmon recovery to water quality, I am committed to policies that protect both the environment and our communities. We must have a fair, balanced approach that takes everyone's needs into consideration.

The agriculture community faces many other challenges this year. One of those is nutrient management, which concerns how dairy farmers, cattle ranchers, and other farmers who tend cows manage the waste on their farms.

Turning to other matters, transportation is a big topic this session. The Legislature will put together a significant funding package that will assure our state a quality transportation system. But we will not raise the gas tax.

Tough new anti-crime measures are also on the plate: We'll be passing laws to stiffen juvenile justice laws, and to crack down on drunk driving.

Education remains high on our agenda. Republicans will follow up their ed reforms of the past three years with a focus on high academic standards and local control.

All in all, it's a busy session, and I think we'll accomplish a great deal for the people of Washington state. As always, it is a pleasure and an honor to represent the 13th District.

Sincerely,

Committees:

Agriculture and Ecology, *chair*
Transportation Policy and Budget
Natural Resources

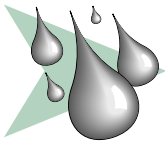
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WATER ISSUES

Putting together a watershed management plan is one of my top priorities this year. Last year Gov. Gary Locke vetoed the Legislature's watershed legislation, but this year I am working with colleagues in the House and Senate to come up with a bill that all sides can agree on.

Here's what we're focusing on:

Local control – The basis of any good watershed plan is the involvement of local communities. We must make sure local people are at the center of the planning and management process.

Endangered Species Act – New fish listings under the ESA have a considerable effect on watershed management. In formulating a watershed plan, we'll have to take into account the extra steps needed to comply with salmon recovery efforts.

Also...

Water rights for cities is a pressing issue, since many of them need an efficient, reliable source of water. I'll work to make it easier for cities to develop interconnections – also called "interties" – between public water systems that allow for the exchange or delivery of water between those systems. Interties let water systems meet increased water demands without having to go through the complicated process of obtaining water rights – a process that can take years to complete.

Water re-use in parks, ball fields, farm grounds and the like is a good policy that saves money and is good for the environment. I'll be looking at ways to make water re-use more affordable, efficient and available.

Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs, set standards for acceptable and unacceptable levels of pollutants in streams. I'm working with the Department of Ecology on what direction to take on TMDLs. I would prefer not to create new programs, but to see what present programs aren't working and fix them.



SALMON RECOVERY

A bipartisan group of House and Senate members has joined to form the Salmon Recovery Task Force. We've been holding hearings throughout the fall and winter to gather information about the best way to protect our salmon populations.

Obviously, this is a very controversial issue, one that will not be solved overnight. But our goal is to work with the governor on a salmon plan that is fair and balanced.



AGRICULTURE

As I mentioned earlier, dairy nutrient management will be addressed this year. You've probably read about this issue -- indeed, environmental regulators are turning more attention toward how dairies manage the nutrients that run off their farms.

You've also probably heard about the controversy over materials in fertilizers. And I have good news for people who are concerned about news reports of potentially hazardous ingredients in the fertilizer supply:

The state departments of Agriculture, Ecology and Health have determined that current selected use of industrial wastes in fertilizer does not pose a threat to people or to the food supply. Nevertheless, we will work this session on making standards for fertilizers even more stringent than they are now.



Ag tour a success

Last August I was pleased to bring members of the House and Senate, the Locke administration, agricultural and environmental groups, as well as staffers for U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton and Rep. Doc Hastings to Moses Lake for an agriculture tour of central Washington.

For three days we visited dams, observed new irrigation and farming techniques, looked at migrant worker housing facilities, and discussed issues such as salmon recovery, water policy and how to best balance the needs of the ag community with environmental concerns.

The ag tour was a great success, and I believe it promoted a better understanding of the richness and variety of Washington state agriculture, as well as the challenges facing the ag community.

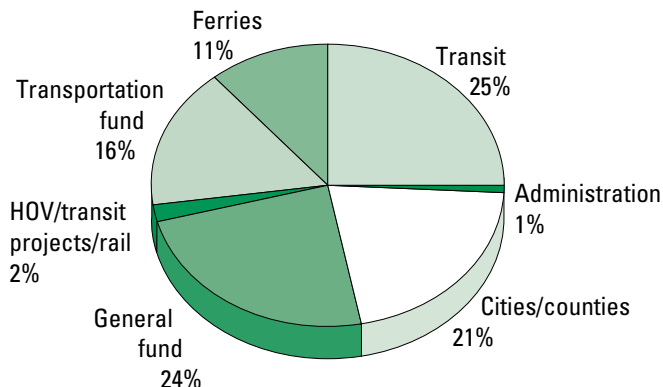


TRANSPORTATION

Our state's economic prosperity depends largely on its transportation system. Without proper roads, rails and waterways, goods can't be efficiently transported from point A to point B. And since our economy relies so much on trade, we need top-notch transportation to see us through.

MVET Distributions

Total 1997-99: \$1.59 billion

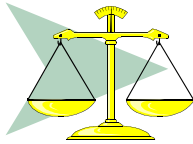


The Legislature is committed to funding a transportation system that will ensure our state's competitive edge -- but we will NOT raise the gas tax.

Here are some of the funding proposals we're considering:

Shifting more MVET funds to transportation – Most people are surprised to learn that only 16 percent of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET), which is the property tax you pay on your car, goes directly to the general transportation fund. Republican legislators are proposing to use more of the MVET funds for transportation projects.

Using some of the budget surplus – Because the Legislature has successfully cut government spending, by mid-1999 we will have a budget surplus of some \$861 million. Although we will keep a significant portion of that in a "rainy day" reserve, we could use some of the funds to help pay for transportation.



CRIME

The Legislature will continue to pass anti-crime measures that protect our families and communities. More specifically, I'm working on the following legislation:

- **Drunk driving** – A person stopped for, and suspected of, drunk driving could have his or her license plates confiscated. The individual would be given temporary plates for 45 days while the case is being processed. If he or she is proven guilty, the plates would be confiscated for a significant period, or perhaps — if the individual is a repeat offender — permanently.

- **Criminal justice funding** – Many cities and local communities are struggling to find money for criminal justice. I'd like to remove the current cap on funding that comes out of MVET. I'll also be working to find possible new revenue sources for criminal justice.



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Listen to the Legislature on-line!

If you have a computer with a sound system, and have access to the Internet, you can listen to all deliberations of the state Legislature -- live. You can also tune into previous days' deliberations. This service is provided by TVW, Washington state's version of C-Span -- it is the statewide non-profit television network.

The website address is www.tvw.org.

The software you need to listen to the Legislature is free and can be downloaded over the Internet.

Let me know what you think

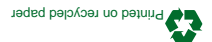
If you have questions, comments or suggestions about this year's session, please contact me -- I need your input! You can call, write or e-mail me, and I'll do my best to address your concerns.

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